

THE CANADIAN RAILROAD HISTORICAL ASSN.

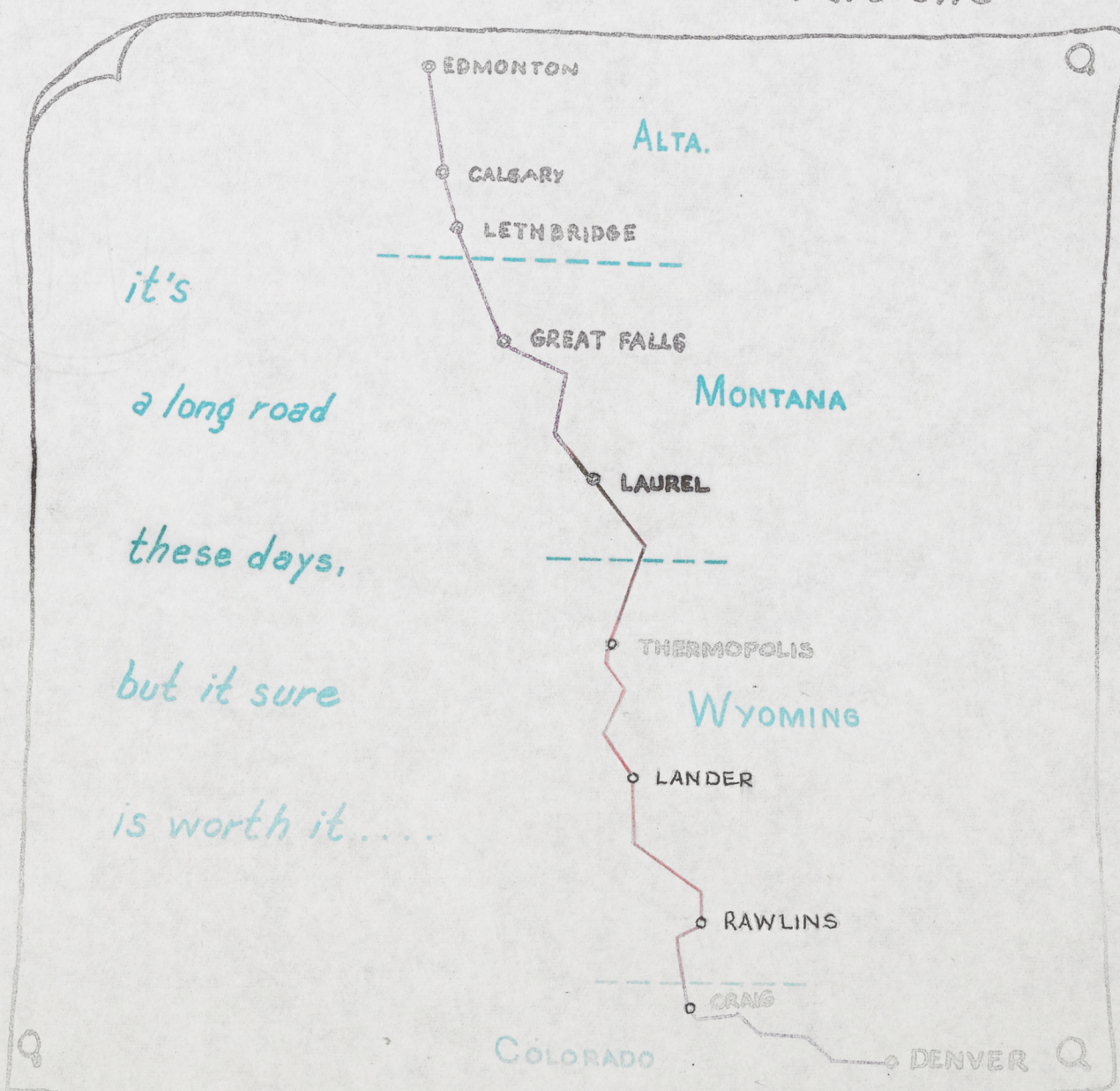
RATTLE



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IN SEARCH OF STEAM.... - Part One



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IN SEARCH OF STEAM.

(by Eric Johnson, with valuable assistance from Doug Mc.Kechnie.)

When we heard that the National Railway Historical Society were planning to hold their annual convention in Denver over the Labour Day weekend, and that several steam engines would be there, Doug and I decided that this was an event we should not miss.

So, on the afternoon of Tuesday, 27th. August, we set off from Edmonton under a dull sky and made a more or less nonstop run to Lethbridge. We saw only one sign of railway activity--- the evening Budd cars racing north on the CPR near Airdrie.

However, the next morning was much brighter and we had a hasty look around the CPR yards in Lethbridge. At the station, we saw an old coach, No. 18, being switched by a Baldwin yard switcher and a Budd railcar waiting to run to Calgary at 9.00 am --otherwise all the motive power was Fairbanks Morse. (To be precise , an A unit C-liner, 4452; and three Baby Trainmasters, 8610, 8715 and 8717.) After watching the Calgary railiner cross the mighty Lethbridge viaduct (the worlds highest of its type)- during which Doug discovered that its no good trying to take movies with a camera which has been assembled wrongly, and I discovered that a recorder in ones car is rather useless so far as taking train sounds is concerned, if you are standing at track side -- after all this we set off for Sweetgrass and the land of promise (which you just dont believe if you read all the roadside adverts !)

However, at Milk River, we overtook a freight heading in the same direction (Baby Trainmaster 8713, 23 Union Pacific covered hoppers and 6 miscellaneous cars) and stopped to view and photograph it.

Right by the American Customs house, we saw the Great Northern mixed from Shelby, which connects with the CPR train we had just seen-- a garish GP9 and an old combine-- but couldn't take pictures as the road was under very heavy repair and we were instructed to "follow that truck" to get out on to the road south. We paused briefly at Shelby but saw no action on the GN main line at all. Continuing south, we soon crossed the tracks of the Montana Western, a delightful short line running from Valier to the GN secondary main at Conrad. Here again, although we saw several miles of their track, we saw no action, since they run into Conrad quite early in the morning and put their 550 hp. Baldwin switcher No. 100 (makers number 76106, Mar. 1955) away before midday. They run mixed service daily except Sundays, and there is a reasonable hotel in Valier if you want to ride this line-- our nearest true short line.

It was a lovely sunny hot day as we continued south to Great Falls where we stopped for a picnic on the banks of the Missouri, between the bridges of the GN and Milwaukee. Once again we saw no action on either line but the graceful old MILW depot now is fenced off from the track and bears large "Purina Chows" signs on all sides. The only railroad touch is the (oldstyle) MILW herald high on the clock tower. Apparently the railroad has found a tenant for at least one of its surplus stations.

We left town on Hwy. 87 headed east and spotted what appears to be a new museum about ten miles out of Great Falls. There was a large collection of old traction engines and farm machinery; at the back of the site there was an engine and a coach. (the coach is almost certainly Montana Westerns car 200, ex GN combine, while it is possible that the engine was a Shay from a logging road near Anaconda- this I will try to confirm).

Near Belt, we turned south toward Livingston, and drove along quite a narrow valley, paralleling an abandoned GN grade, leading to the "junction" at Monarch (a semi ghost town which still has some attractive oldtime structures) of two mining lines each 13 miles long; one east to Hughesville, and the other south to Niehart. This we followed, to find a typical western mining town -the mines were all derelict but the remaining people seemed to be living on tourism and hunting and fishing. Lead, zinc and some silver were mined here since about 1892 until the line was closed in 1952. At White Sulphur Springs we reached the north end of another short line - the W.S.S. and Yellowstone Park. This "belongs" to the Ringling family of circus fame and now owns no equipment, renting a MILW switcher (with whom it connects at Ringling) as needed. It does have a pickup truck with the lines name and herald on the cab door (they MUST use small lettering, I should think !!!)

By now it was near dusk so we headed east to Harlowtown, the eastern end of the Milwaukee's electrified zone from Avery, Idaho. A Little Joe electric was standing in the yard, but the yard clerk told us no trains would be moving until the next morning, so we delayed no more, but drove south to Big Timber and then east through the dark to Laurel, where we stopped for the night. This last run was along the Northern Pacific main line, but all we saw was a drag freight west pulling into a siding at Reedpoint. However, later in the evening we saw-- and heard, our motel being at trackside-- several freights. We also talked to the operator and found that the threatened railroad strike which was due to start at midnight, had been called off.

Thursday was a dull day, in more senses than one !

To start with, it was a dull cloudy day and then we had the whole of Wyoming to cross. Now while the semi desert scenery has a beauty of its own, it does not compare with the mountains of Montana, and in any case our minds were on Colorado ahead, and its waiting steam engines.

Anyway we headed generally south, following the Colorado and Southern line through Lovell, Greybull and Thermopolis to the spectacular Wind River Canyon. Near here we glimpsed one train-the northbound Fast Mail from Denver to Billings with a silver CBQ ES and three cars (the Pullman this train used to carry has evidently been discontinued). At Shoshoni, the C and S line heads off to the east to Casper but we went south to Lander to the western extremity of the Chicago and North Western. No passenger service, just a freight which arrives on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings and leaves for the east the next morning. From here we had 130 railroadless miles to drive to Rawlins, where we joined the UP main line and followed it west for some 20 miles to Creston. We were disappointed not to see a train on this most busy of main lines in the west (but we got our fill of Union Pacific later in the trip) and then turned south for the final seventy miles into Craig, Colorado, where our railfanning was to start (my apologies to Omer Lavallee for that forbidden word, but this was on NRHS time and NOT the CRNA !!!)

Now, while we were driving down from Alberta, a party of Iowa Chapter members (of the NRHS) had left Chicago behind the CBQ 4-8-4 No. 5632 for Denver, via the Black Hills Central (3ft. gauge steam operated tourist line near Hill City, South Dakota). On the Thursday as we crossed Wyoming, some of these enthusiasts travelled to Craig in two special cars attached to the Denver and Rio Grande Western train 9, the Yampa Valley Mail. (This runs over what was the Denver and Salt Lake, built by tDave Moffat early in the 1900s to provide

Denver with a direct route to the west. Crippled by the high costs of snow fighting over Corona Pass, the line petered out at Craig, which is still the end of track, although Moffat Tunnel has now replaced the 'Giants Ladder'). We joined this group at the Cosgriff --at least that was the idea, but they were full, and we finally landed up in the annexe of the Alamo (I hope John Wayne doesnt get to hear of THAT !) However this did have an advantage as we were right nextdoor to "Marcia", the beautiful Business Car built by Pullman in 1906 for the D and SL and used by Dave Moffat until his death. Recently it was presented to the City of Craig and is now us used as a tourist information office. It is very well looked after by Mrs Robinson, who is a rail fan as well as the historian of the Moffat clan.

We were on the move early on Friday morning (Aug. 30) to see "Marcia" and then made our way to the station for the 8 am departure. The train consisted of two ALCOs, an A and a B unit (6001 and 6002) a Rio Grande mail car (627), A Rio Grande streamlined coach lettered for the California Zephyr and the two special cars. One was a ten section Pullman lettered "North West Railway Historical Foundation" and named James.C. Foster and the other was a round ended streamlined parlor observation named "The Reveller" of Pennsylvania RR ancestry. The James C Foster had been modified internally, some of the sleeping space having been removed and was used as a diner on this occasion. Doug, who rode the train, says the cold meal was quite a good one.

Also in the yard were two Rio Grande GP9s -5313 and 5922- which arrived with a freight about 9pm. and were to follow the passenger (No. 10) later in the morning.

The train left more or less on time and I chased it through Hayden, where another freight westbound was in the siding, to Steamboat Springs and so into Oak Creek valley. This is quite narrow and winding and the track is lined with the debris of coal mining for many miles as far as Phippsburg. However it was nice to see that the coal mining is increasing- a new power plant is being built in this area to burn the local coal- and a switcher is now stationed at Phippsburg at a brand new corrugated iron engine house. South of here, the valley widens and ranching takes over as the major industry. At Toponas, I watched the train by and then followed the main road over the mountains to Kremmling. The railway winds via Bond into the very scenic Gore canyon where there is no road. By now the sunny sky was overcast as I followed the line through the narrow Byers Canyon to Hot Sulphur Springs, where I lunched and saw a westbound freight, the California Zephyr westbound with four dome cars and then the westbound Yampa Valley mail all in quick succession. This last train also had two Alco units and carried four empty arched window DRGW cars. When the eastbound train finally came down the canyon it was 30 minutes late and it was pouring with rain-- it also had the four DRGW cars spliced into it !!! It turned out that they had been deadheaded out from Denver to pick up a party of 4-H members from camp at Granby, though why they went ^{e!} left at Granby, instead of being deadheaded an extra hundred miles, I don't know.

Anyhow, they picked up passengers all along the line and got steadily later until I was forced to leave the train at the west portal of Moffat Tunnel and climb over the Continental Divide at nearly 12,000 feet at Loveland Pass and then thread Clear Creek Canyon past storied Georgetown and Idaho Springs and so into Denver to the Union Station, where the train had beaten me by some

thirty miles. Doug and I then headed some fifteen miles back toward the mountains to Golden to the Colorado Railroad Museum. Here on several acres of ground is to be found a remarkable collection of old railway equipment, which we inspected more thoroughly later in our tour, and which I will describe in a later instalment (Yes, I hate to break the bad news but you will have to suffer this for several months to come !!!)

Our main interest on this occasion was Golden City and San Juan 2-8-0 No. 346. This narrow gauge engine, ex DRGW is the oldest steam engine in Colorado, having been built by Baldwin in 1881. Idle since 1948, it was overhauled last year and is now back in steam, at least for important events. The museum was being presented with its largest exhibit, a Burlington 4-8-4 (No. 5629, sister engine to 5632) and to commemorate this, 346 hauled a special train (Business Car K (ex DRGW) about 100 feet from the museum building to alongside 5629, so that the speeches could be made in traditional style from the open platform !!!!!

To the delight of many spectators, the impatient engineer offered whistle solos at all kind of inappropriate points during this ceremony !! Anyway it was delightful to see this tiny ancient engine back in steam -- burning coal yet..

By the time the goings on had went (?) it was nearly dark and the evening was spent renewing acquaintance with a friend, Russ Collman, and looking at the many convention displays at the Brown Palace Hotel, including some lovely live steamers in 1" scale (the "General" and the "Texas" in particular, by Joe Myers of St. Louis)

It was fairly early to bed for us as we had an active day of trainchasing ahead. This too is an ideal spot to stop this account.

Next month--- 4-8-4 to Laramie, and a "sweet" 2-10-0 to Loveland.

MEETING

The regular monthly meeting of the Rocky Mnt. Branch of the CRHA, will be held in the Cromdale Car Shops on Tues, Oct. 8th, at 8:00 pm. John Weikle will speak on the Calgary Municipal Rly. a system which ran in a small town south of Edmonton, a few years ago.

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Last months and this months issue have not been of the best quality as it is too light a printing job, however we hope you all understand that time and facilities are at a premium.

This month see's the beginning of the Guest Editor series we promised you. It is the first of a possible three part series which is the "first" of it's kind in this newsletter. The first was kindly volunteered by Eric Johnson. This series should reveal a interesting fact of "railfan" trips - the movements of the individual are completely dictated by the movements of the trains. Sleep, eating, sometimes minor traffic laws are lost by the way-side. Some of the most hectic moments this Editor remembers are those when on a "railfan" trip. When all is said and done however, you wouldn't have missed it for anything.

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The Rattler would like to thank Bob King for loaning us issues #1 and 2 so that copies could be made for the libraries in Edmonton and Montreal. This proves that someone reads the newsletter.

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Streetcar No. 1

Cityhall has made the procurement of the street car parts in - possible for a short while longer. Seems that bookkeeping is closed by a certain date and cheques cannot be issued until the following period. Still, don't forget that date for the work party on the street car. Monday, Sept. 30th at 7:00 pm.

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No news report this month, but next month should be interesting. Let us know how the labels and envelopes arrive. Thanks.

